

Join the Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver!

From campuses to suburbs, and everywhere in between, we are committed to working with all organizations and individuals calling for the freedom of these 5 heroes. Our campaign includes forums, petition drives, vigils, and a monthly picket action in front of the U.S. Consulate in Vancouver initiated in 2005. Through this constant work, we have collected over 5000 signatures demanding their immediate release. We have also been joined in this effort by 56 Canadian parliamentarians who signed a letter to the U.S. government demanding freedom for the Cuban Five.

We work as part of over 300 solidarity groups in every continent worldwide. We are committed to continue organizing around their case, and will demand justice for the Cuban Five until they are all free!

Please join us in our bi-weekly meetings, educational events, and our monthly picket actions on the 5th of every month to coincide with activities which take place around the world known as "the 5th of the month for the Cuban 5".



Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver
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FREE ALL THE 5 CUBAN HEROES NOW!

THE CUBAN 5

Fall 2013/2nd Edition



Newsletter of the
Free the Cuban 5 Committee-Vancouver, Canada

WWW.FREETHE5VANCOUVER.CA

WE WANT TO SEE MORE YELLOW RIBBONS EVERYWHERE!

British Columbia Marks 15 Years of the Unjust Imprisonment of the Cuban 5 Heroes with 7 Events in 4 Days

September 12th, 2013 marked 15 years since the original imprisonment in the United States of the Cuban 5 anti-terrorist Heroes. A lot has changed since 1998 - for the world and for Gerardo, René, Antonio, Fernando and Ramon. Their children are no longer children, 3 US Presidents have come and gone, and the Cuban 5 themselves have begun to show grey hairs. One thing, however, which has never changed, is the love and determination which has radiated from these five men as they continue to fight for justice from behind bars - convinced both of the justness and the success of their struggle.



The international campaign for the Cuban 5 Heroes has itself changed. It has become more diverse, more international, more coordinated, and more effective. The judge acknowledged the decisive role it had played in having the sentences of Ramon, Fernando, and Antonio reduced in 2009. Public outcry was also an important factor in the US government's decision to allow René González to return to Cuba permanently before the end of his vindictively scheduled parole.

When René arrived back home to Cuba, he made it clear he would not rest until all of his four other brothers returned permanently to Cuba as well, and the campaign demand became, "Free ALL of the Cuban 5 Now!" In early September, René went on Cuban television to announce a, "Yellow Ribbon Campaign" to mark the 15th anniversary of the imprisonment of the Cuban 5. He urged Cubans, and everyone, to tie yellow ribbons everywhere, "...this ribbon has become a symbol for Americans waiting for someone on a mission abroad, waiting for a soldier, waiting for a loved one, and this is the message which we want to send to the American people: so that they know that the Cuban people are waiting for four of their sons unjustly incarcerated in the United States."

In British Columbia (BC), Canada, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver responded by organizing and coordinating 7 actions in 4 days across BC for the Cuban 5 Heroes. From September 12th to 15th, a wave of yellow ribbons travelled from the four corners of Vancouver, across ocean waters to Vancouver Island and Bowen Island, and hundreds of kilometres East to the city of Kamloops. This took place as Cubans responded by turning their island bright yellow with thousands of ribbons, and many others took up the campaign with actions on every continent around the world. *(Continues on back page)*

FREE ALL THE CUBAN 5 NOW!

96th MONTHLY PROTEST ACTION
TUESDAY NOVEMBER 5
 4:50PM @ U.S. CONSULATE (1075 W. PENDER ST)

FREE THE CUBAN 5 COMMITTEE-VANCOUVER
 @FREETHE5VAN WWW.FREETHE5VANCOUVER.CA

FREE ALL THE CUBAN 5 NOW!

A political & cultural evening with
JAVIER DOMOKOS
 Cuban Consul General in Toronto Speaks on the Case of the Cuban 5

Saturday, October 19
 4:30 pm

Mount Pleasant
 Neighbourhood House
 800 East Broadway
 Vancouver, Canada



VANCOUVER COMMUNITIES IN SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA
WWW.VANCUBASOLIDARITY.COM
 FREE THE CUBAN 5 COMMITTEE VANCOUVER
WWW.FREETHE5VANCOUVER.CA

Every day they spend in jail is a mockery of human decency

by René Gonzalez

Reprinted from The Guardian - Sept. 12, 2013

In August 1962, I was an ordinary Cuban child who had just turned eight years old. I can still remember the commotion all over Havana after someone sailed a boat to within a mile of the city's coastline and fired a cannon at a hotel. They then turned north and headed for safe haven in Miami.

That experience repeated itself for me and for my four comrades, who are still in US prisons, as I was until recently. The five of us grew up in Cuba, witnessing the kidnapping and assassination of Cuban fishermen, and the culprits would then return to their safe haven in Miami. A gunboat crew attacked and killed the crew of a Spanish freighter off the coast of Cuba and then returned to their safe haven in Miami. In 1976, two terrorists of Cuban origin, after having organized the bombing of a Cubana airliner which killed 73 people, found safe haven back in Miami. Twenty years later, one orchestrated a bombing campaign against Cuban hotels, which cost the life of an Italian citizen.

No wonder all of us agreed to go to Miami in order to infiltrate and monitor the activities of a section of Cuban-Americans who, for over 30 years, had brought death and suffering on the Cuban people through what should be called terrorist activities designed to bring down our government. No wonder, either, that upon landing in Miami, one of the first groups that I joined was headed by the very guy who had fired the canon on the Havana hotel, back when I was an eight-year-old child.

In May 1998, the Cuban government thought the time had come to engage the US government on the fight against terrorism. Gabriel García Márquez, Colombian author and Nobel Prize winner, was the personal liaison sent by Fidel Castro to the White House with the proposition. As a result of this contact, an FBI delegation went to Havana in June of that year. They were given a dossier on the terrorist groups still operating in Miami, and returned to the US after assuring the Cuban side that something would be done about the issue.

Good to their word, on 12 September 1998 something was done: armed officers burst into my home, threatened and cuffed me, traumatized my family, and took me to prison. The FBI raided the houses and arrested the people who had been monitoring the terrorist activities groups, protected by the US government and operating freely from Miami.

No wonder the five of us were found guilty of all charges after a phoney trial in Miami. No wonder the prosecutors asked the judge to "incapacitate" the defendants so as to prevent them monitoring the activities of their terrorists in the future. No wonder, on 14 December 2001, the Judge obliged:

Whether terrorism is committed against innocents in the United States or Cuba, Israel or Jordan, Northern Ireland or India, it is evil and it is wrong, but the terrorist acts by others cannot excuse the wrongful and illegal conduct of this defendant or any other.

A further punishment by the US government was inflicted on my wife Olga, who along with Adriana Perez, the wife of Gerardo Hernando, were arbitrarily denied visas to visit us for more than 10 years.

And then, after I had served my 15 year sentence, I was prevented from returning home, and confined to Florida on supervised release, where the cruel irony was lost on the judge who imposed a clause which would guarantee to the prosecution the incapacitation they had asked for:

As a further special condition of supervised release the defendant is prohibited from associating with or visiting specific places where individuals of groups such as terrorists, members of organizations advocating violence, and organized crime figures are known to be or frequent.

What makes some terrorists good guys and some others bad guys? Do the lives of Cuban citizens not deserve to be protected? Is there some international legal instrument which bestows upon the United States judiciary the privilege to serve as a protector of terrorism?

While these and many other questions beg for an answer, four Cuban patriots languish in American prisons for the crime of having sacrificed themselves to protect the lives of others.

Every day they spend in jail is a mockery of human decency.

(Continued from front page)

September 12th - 4 events in 1 day for the Cuban 5 in Vancouver, BC!

Vancouver actions started early in the South end of the city. By 7am, morning commuters crossing one of the busiest bridges in the city could not help but notice a giant red banner demanding freedom for the Cuban 5. The banner was set up by the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association (CCFA) – Vancouver and supported by Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver members. Given that the banner is the size of a highway billboard, it was impossible to miss for the thousands of vehicles slowly crossing the packed Knight Street Bridge. The trees surrounding the banner were all covered in bright yellow ribbons as well!



The yellow ribbons then migrated from South to North, as supporters of the Cuban 5 joined the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver to hang a large banner on the pedestrian bridge leading to the Lions Gate Bridge - one of the busiest thoroughfares in Vancouver. Participants tied yellow ribbons to the bridge and held their picket signs to draw the attention of people on their daily commute to the case of the Cuban 5 Heroes.

The yellow ribbons then moved West, in front of the United States Consulate in downtown Vancouver. This was the 94th monthly picket action organized in front of the US Consulate by the Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver. This time, supporters of the Cuban 5 tied dozens of yellow ribbons around every tree and pole on both sides of the street. Of course, the biggest and brightest ribbons were saved for the trees directly in front of the Consulate doors!

After making sure that yellow ribbons were beautifully tied everywhere around the Consulate, the picketing began in full force. Over 40 people marched and chanted, including friends and activists from the CCFA – Vancouver, who again brought their fantastic giant red banner.



Between loud and lively rounds of picketing, participants gathered together for important guest speakers. This was led by MC Azza Rojbi, one of the co-coordinators for the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver. Alicia Jrapko, Coordinator of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5, spoke via telephone from a recently completed protest in front of the White House. Janine Solanki read a tribute written to the recently deceased Saul Landau on behalf of the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver. Tamara Hansen, Coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba, spoke of the importance and dynamism of the Yellow Ribbon Campaign for the Cuban 5 Heroes. Independent radio broadcaster and member of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) Charles Boylan, as well as CCFA – Vancouver Executive Committee member Peter Noble, who is also member of Executive Committee of Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC), also both added their voices to the demand to “Free All the Cuban Five Heroes Now!”



Tim Louis, lawyer, former Vancouver city councillor and long-time supporter of the Cuban 5, summarized the mood and determination of the picketers when, surrounded by a mass of yellow ribbons, he concluded by saying, “When the Cuban 5 are released, it will be because of the work of people like you and me.”

There was no rest when the megaphones were put down and the signs were packed up, as the yellow ribbons moved finally to the East of Vancouver for the final event of the day, a cultural and political event at Joe’s Café.

The room was again decorated with many yellow ribbons, and included a special area dedicated to Saul Landau. The event opened with another tribute to Saul, who may have passed away recently, but who left behind a legacy of over 50 years of dedicated social justice organizing and film making. He had always been a huge campaigner for the freedom of the Cuban 5 Heroes, making his last documentary film, “Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up?” about their case, and frequently reporting on his visits with actor Danny Glover to Gerardo Hernández in prison. Janine Solanki again read the dedication to Saul, and Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver organizer Thomas Davies read the lyrics to the Silvio Rodríguez song, “The Stubborn One” (El Necio) while reflecting on Saul’s passion and dedication. The audience was also treated to screenings to some of Saul’s short films about the Cuban 5.



The evening was again MCd by Azza Rojbi, who was joined by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) coordinator, Tamara Hansen. VCSC endorsed the 7 B.C. actions, and played a very active role in building them. A beautiful video of, “Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree” performed by some of the most renowned musicians in Cuba, and featuring the families of the Cuban 5, was then screened to much applause. See video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtLigLq5asQ>

The event received a recorded greeting from the Cuban Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Julio Garmendia, who thanked the Vancouver for its consistent campaign in support the Cuban 5. He was followed by Tim Louis, who detailed some of the absurdities in the legal process against the Cuban 5, and reminded everyone that it will be the court of public opinion and mobilization which will render the decisive verdict in their case.

The cultural component of the evening ranged from poetry written for the Cuban 5 by Shakeel Lochan, to passionate and original Latin-American melodies by MX Katracho, who tied a yellow ribbon to his guitar and announced that he would not remove it until the Cuban 5 were all free. The evening was closed by the ever-supportive, ever-energetic rapper Joose Justis, who got everyone moving while chanting, “Free the 5! Free the 5! Free the 5!”

With that, the evening came to a close, but definitely not the weekend of activities for the Cuban 5.

September 13, 14, 15 - Nanaimo, Kamloops, and Bowen Island...the Cuban 5 Campaign on the Move!

Event 5: Nanaimo Gets a New Committee

While the Vancouver events were very successful, the events held in other



parts of BC mark an important step forward for the campaign. The first ever Cuban 5 event was held on Bowen Island, and both Kamloops and Nanaimo are beginning to develop consistent activities for the Cuban 5 and introducing entirely new communities to the case.

These events began when the yellow ribbons took to the high seas as organizers took a ferry to Vancouver Island for the Cuban 5 event in Nanaimo, co-sponsored by the Vancouver Island University Faculty Association - Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee, the Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver and a group of local supporters of the Cuban 5 Heroes.

Held at the Vancouver Island University campus, the event featured a screening of the emotional documentary about the families of the Cuban 5, “The Cuban Wives”, live acoustic music by Eliza Gardiner, and presentations by both VCSC coordinator Tamara Hansen and Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver co-coordinator Azza Rojbi. The event included a significant tribute to Saul Landau, and also focused on the importance of the new Yellow Ribbon Campaign and its possibilities.

The most exciting part of the evening was the announcement by Nanaimo organizers during the discussion period of the formation of a new Cuban 5 Committee in Nanaimo! A sign-up sheet was passed around and a first meeting has already been announced. This is a great step forward and a natural response to the growing interest in the case of the Cuban 5 in Nanaimo.

Event 6: Kamloops Opens More Doors

The next day’s event took place in Kamloops. It was co-sponsored by the Kamloops Socialist Club and the Free the Cuban 5 Committee- Vancouver, and held in the popular “The Art We Are Café” in downtown Kamloops. The event was co-MCed by Kamloops Socialist Club organizer Darcy Robinson, and Free the Cuban 5 Committee - Vancouver organizer Aaron Mercredi.



Again there was a heartfelt tribute to Saul Landau and the screening of some of his shorter films on the Cuban 5, as well as other video clips that brought the case up to date from the original arrest to the ongoing campaign.

Free the Cuba Committee -Vancouver organizer Noah Fine also sang some classic songs accompanied by his acoustic guitar, while the Cuban 5 tour musical headliner Joose Justis yet again found new ways to work the campaign to Free the Cuban 5 Heroes into his rhymes.

The event closed with a presentation on the Cuban 5 Yellow Ribbon Campaign by Azza Rojbi, and afterwards event participants took to the streets to pin yellow ribbons on trees in downtown Kamloops. Events about Cuba and the Cuban 5 are becoming a regular occurrence in Kamloops, and developing relationships in many different areas promise there are more to come!

Event 7: Bowen Island Breaks New Ground!

The final event was reserved for Bowen Island, where a young woman who had met with the families of the Cuban 5 several years ago on a volunteer trip to Cuba decided that the case should be brought to her community. It was the first event ever for the Cuban 5 on Bowen Island, and a great achievement. The event was held in the Cates Hill Chapel, and beyond other program elements, also included a children’s area where kids could make their own Cuban flag and a Cuban “museum” with Cuban art and handicrafts on display.



The event was MCd by its main organizer Samantha Sarra. She explained her reasons for wanting to bring the case of the Cuban 5 to Bowen Island, and her hope that this was the beginning of more work to come. She had already been able to raise a lot of awareness with an article published in the local newspaper about the case of the Cuban 5, which also helped a lot in bringing out interested Bowen Islanders to the event. (See article here: <http://www.bowenislandundercurrent.com/opinion/222586081.html>).

The program focused on introducing the case of the Cuban 5 Heroes to a new audience, and also all of the different ways people can get involved in the campaign Judging by the interest, this will definitely not be the last event for the Cuban 5 on Bowen Island.

Free ALL the Cuban 5 Now!

While an intense period of action for the Cuban 5 Heroes has come to a close in BC, new possibilities continue to emerge for the campaign. The Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver has learned in its past decade of organizing that consistency, creativity, and campaigning are vital to the success of any social justice initiative and struggle. The international campaign is really only beginning to scratch the surface of its possibilities, and new projects like the Yellow Ribbon Campaign and the emergence of new organizing centres prove there is still a huge dynamism build on to make sure we can, “Free ALL the Cuban 5 Now!” VOLVERÁN!

Canadians Join Yellow-Ribbon Campaign for Freedom of the Cuban Five



Prensa Latina News Agency

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

Canadian organizations in British Columbia have joined a yellow-ribbon campaign to demand freedom for the Cuban Five, who have been held in U.S. prisons for the last 15 years.

Activist Tamara Hansen reported today that numerous solidarity groups have answered an appeal launched in Cuba by one of the Five, Rene Gonzalez, -released after serving his sentence- to demand the release of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez.

Inspired by the lyrics of Russell Brown and Irwin Levine’s song “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree,” Rene called on Cubans to display yellow ribbons as a way of calling attention to the 15th anniversary of his arrest and that of his four compatriots, and to bring attention to the case.

The Five were detained in Miami on September 12, 1998, and handed down harsh sentences for preventing actions as those that have caused more than 1,400 victims in Cuba in the last 53 years.

Rene was released on October 7, 2011, after serving his sentence, and returned to his country in May after giving up his U.S. citizenship to end an additional sentence of three years’ supervised release.

According to Hansen, from Wednesday to Sunday, the cities of Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kamloops and Bowen Island will be the settings of events to demand the immediate and unconditional release of the Cuban Five.

The program includes a rally in front of the U.S. consulate, cultural activities and the screening of a documentary, The Cuban Wives, by Italian filmmaker Alberto Antonio Dandolo.

The documentary outlines the case of the relatives of the Cuba Five and their international struggle to denounce the unjust way that the case has been handled by the U.S. legal system.

Hansen said the activities were being sponsored by the Socialist Club of Kamloops, the International Committee of Human Rights of the Association of University Teachers of the Island of Vancouver, and the Vancouver Free the Cuban 5 Committee.

The events are part of an international campaign from September 5 to October 6 to call for the release of the Cuban Five.

The Five were tried in Miami amid a hostile media environment aimed at manipulating public opinion, persuading the jury and ensuring their conviction and harsh sentencing.